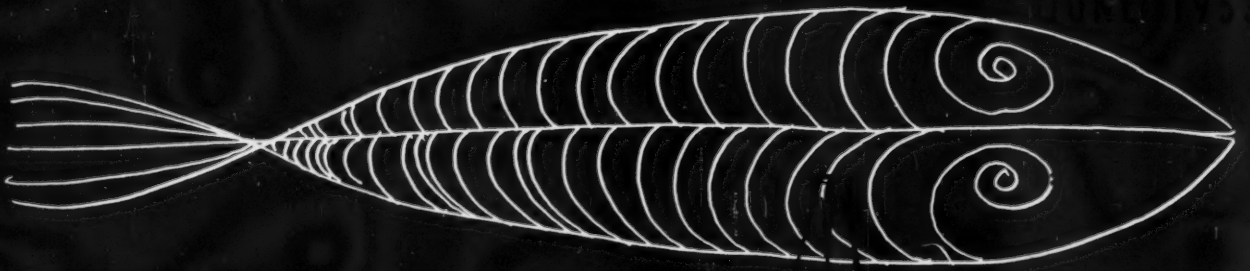
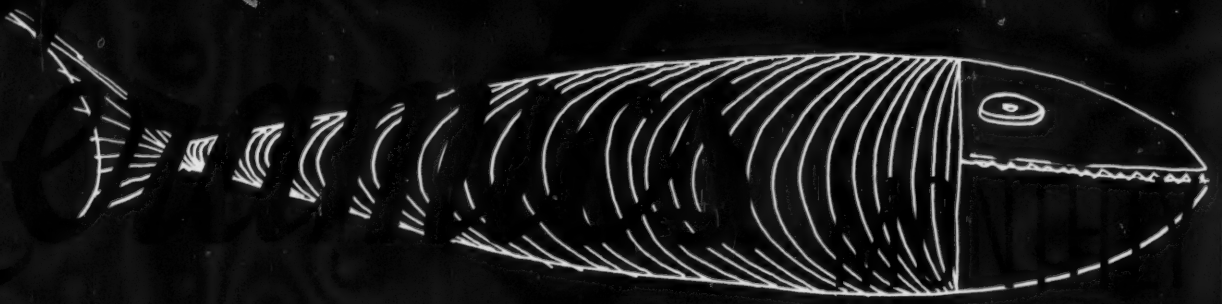
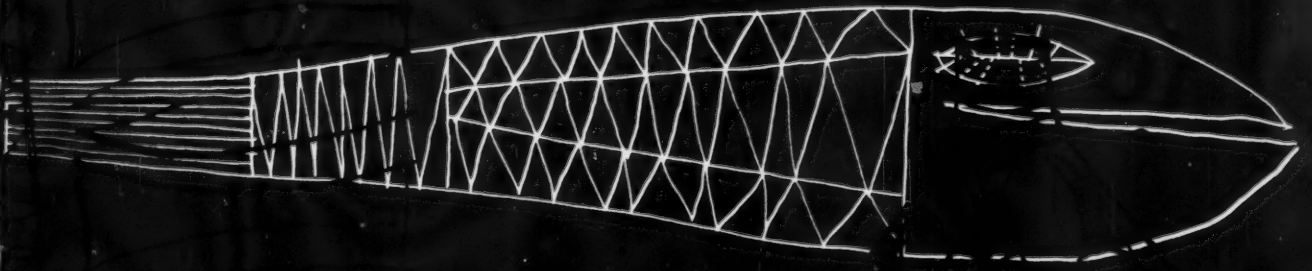
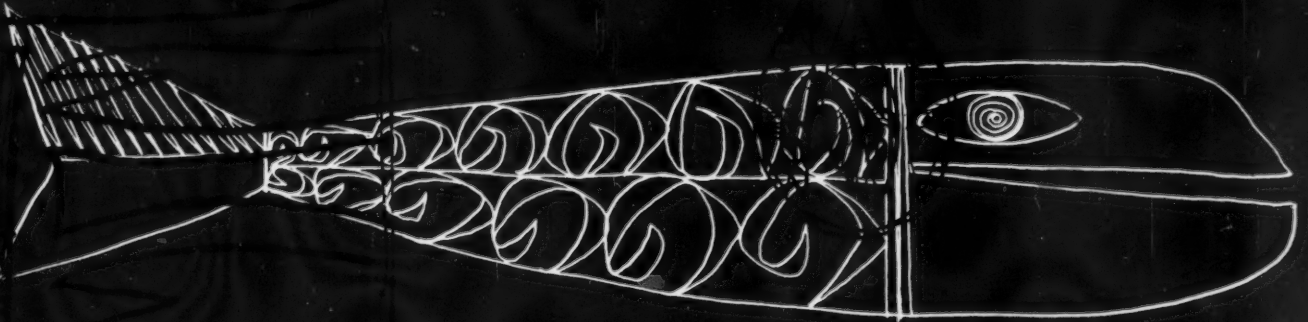


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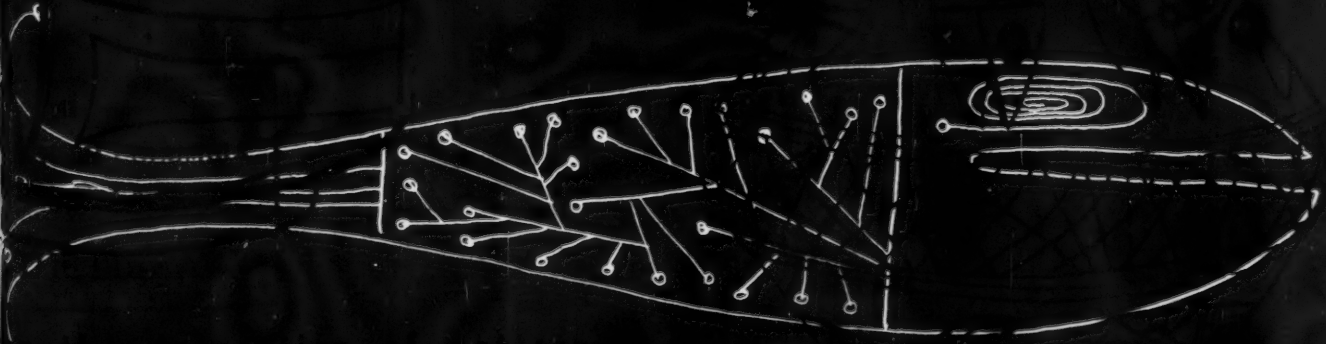


JUNE 1953



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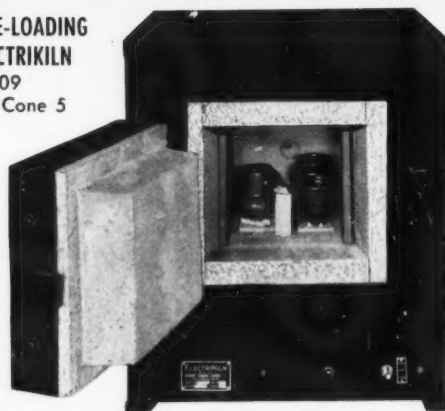
| Top-Loading<br>Model No. | Firing Chamber |        |        |         | Max.<br>Temp. |
|--------------------------|----------------|--------|--------|---------|---------------|
|                          | Width          | Length | Height | Cu. In. |               |
| HTL-16                   | 16             | 16     | 15     | 3840    | 2200° F       |
| TL-8                     | 18             | 18     | 15     | 4860    | 2000° F       |
| TL-6                     | 12             | 12     | 10     | 1440    | 2000° F       |
| TL-5                     | 11             | 11     | 10     | 1210    | 2000° F       |
| TL-4                     | 11             | 11     | 6½     | 786.5   | 2000° F       |

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|---------------------------|----------------|-------|--------|---------|---------------|
|                           | Width          | Depth | Height | Cu. In. |               |
| HT-15                     | 14             | 14    | 15     | 2744    | 2200° F       |
| HT-09                     | 9              | 9     | 9      | 729     | 2200° F       |
| C-1214                    | 12             | 14    | 11     | 1848    | 2000° F       |
| C-500                     | 7½             | 9     | 11     | 742     | 2000° F       |
| 509                       | 9              | 9     | 9      | 729     | 2000° F       |

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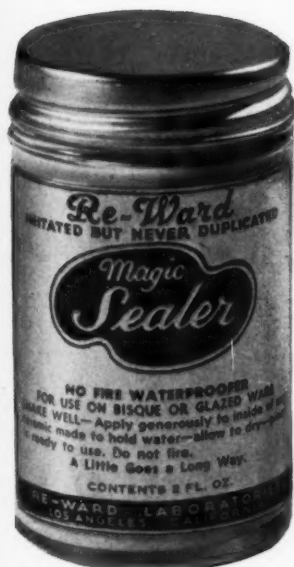
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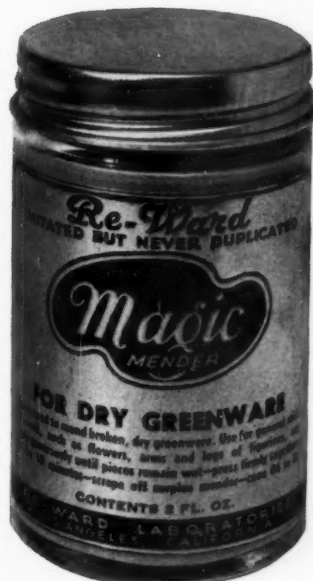
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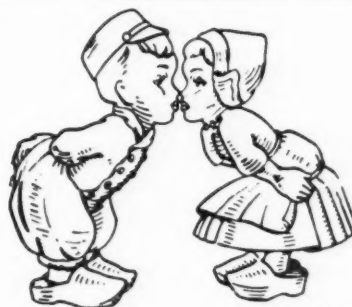
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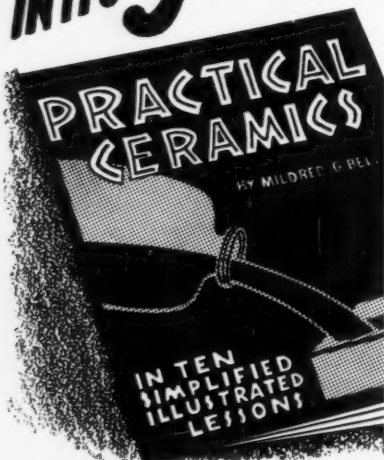


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# letters

## Second Guessing

Gentlemen:

... Would it be possible that in some future issue you might include material on the present work of F. Carlton Ball? His work alone is marvelous, and his work in conjunction with Aaron Bohrod's designs should be very interesting to your readers. He is not only an excellent potter, but is one of the best instructors that I have ever had the good fortune to study with. It may well be too much to ask, but you can't blame me for hoping.

Congratulations on the freshest magazine in years, and I hope I'm around to celebrate your 75th anniversary.

PAUL ATOR

Detroit, Mich.

♦ This request was received just a few days before the May issue (containing the "Profile" on the collaboration of Ball and Bohrod) was mailed. The issue reached reader Ator before a reply letter—hope the shock wasn't too great.

## Suppliers—Supply!

Gentlemen:

... Can't you talk some of your advertisers into giving us more informative ads? Like all hobbyists we want information on equipment and materials that would help us turn out that dream piece, but the manufacturers don't seem to be conditioned to the information-hungry amateur class market...

SALLY GALLAWAY

Indianapolis, Ind.

## Ceramics Monthly, Teacher...

Gentlemen:

As a "hobbyist" with two years in ceramics I can only say I have received more knowledge and benefit from the January and February issues than from over a year of study with teachers and other publications...

Thank you for a fine magazine with wonderfully comprehensive readable articles for beginners like myself.

(Mrs.) HARRY T. GOLDSTINE

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Gentlemen:

Have loved [your magazine]. Hobby potting is for me... Since I've received CERAMICS MONTHLY, my teacher has subscribed—and several others here, too! Keep it coming—keep it as good—and give us hobbyists lots of wonderful new ideas!

LOU HOULLE

St. Louis, Mo.

Gentlemen:

... I have enjoyed every issue of your new magazine and don't want to miss a single issue. I take them to class with me and everyone else wants to see them; guess there are several who get the magazine but leave them at home. I take mine to [my] ceramics and sculpture class...

VERA E. MORRIS

Flint, Mich.

Gentlemen:

As a hobbyist I am delighted with the wealth of information and ideas to be found in your new magazine. I am sharing my

copy with my son who is an amateur sculptor.

(Mrs.) EDYTHE C. WIMBERLEY

Trenton, N. J.

## ... and Monthly Reference

Gentlemen:

Having recently received my fourth copy of CERAMICS MONTHLY, I feel it my duty, as well as my pleasure, to tell you how much I enjoy your magazine. I look forward to each copy with added anticipation for your wonderful articles. My students and I have a discussion period at the end of each class when they ask me questions, and many times CERAMICS MONTHLY has been a most welcome reference book...

(Mrs.) BEVERLY SUMNER

The Beverly Studio  
Falls Church, Va.

## The Acid Test

Gentlemen:

Two copies of CERAMICS MONTHLY have now reached our desk, and we have perused them thoroughly.

Our purpose in doing this was twofold—first we were looking for flaws and second we wanted to improve our knowledge of pottery. In the first instance we failed miserably and in the second we succeeded admirably...

We do not wonder that the first printing is entirely exhausted...

MARY E. BLACK

"Handcrafts"  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

## Pro & Con: English Clays

Gentlemen:

You had a short note in [the February Vignettes] which was rather critical of the status of English clays. I think investigation will show you that almost all of the high-grade vitreous china, such as hotel china, home china service, sanitary ware, and high-tension porcelain insulators, are still made in part, and in some cases entirely, with English clay. The uniformity, the cleanliness and the unique firing properties of this material cannot be gainsaid. Though more expensive than domestic clays, it is better behaved.

There are a number of small but extremely high-grade figurine manufacturing companies in this country that are leaning heavily on English china clay, as it provides them with a whiteness and clarity of translucence which cannot be achieved with any other materials.

MURRAY RUSHMORE, JR.

Moore & Munger  
New York, N. Y.

♦ No ax was (or is) grinding. We asked several competent ceramic engineers about the "Vignette" in question and they were essentially in agreement. They added that the plasticity of English clays is characterized by "greasiness" whereas our clays are a sticky type. This difference could conceivably make the English clays more, or less, suitable for particular uses. As a group, the English clays vitrify at lower temperatures than our clays. However, none would agree to the



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broad statement that they are whiter  
firing.

### 'Long, Successful Life'

Gentlemen:

... my compliments on the excellent  
magazine. Its high caliber and good format  
should insure a long, successful life.

DAISY ROSENKRANZ

Ceramicraft, Inc.

Houston, Texas

### Pro & Con: Free Form

Gentlemen:

... I am most grateful to Dorothy Perkins  
for her articles on free form [CERAMICS  
MONTHLY, February, March, April.] So-  
called free form has reached epidemic pro-  
portions in my classes. I shall save myself  
much wear and tear by demanding them as  
required reading before the execution of free  
form by my students.

MARGARET STIERLIN

Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen:

Your magazine is simply wonderful. I  
have particularly enjoyed "Free Form" by  
Dorothy Perkins. Sincere wishes for con-  
tinued success.

MURIEL TAYLOR

Muriel's Ceramics

Limona, Fla.

Gentlemen:

Your issue for May was a little dis-  
appointing, simply because I have been im-  
patiently waiting for the "Sculptural Forms"  
article promised.

An amateur living and working out here  
in the Southwest, without benefit of class  
instruction, or contact with a group that is  
alive and sparked by mutual desire to create  
in clay, these articles by Dorothy Perkins  
have been exciting and informative to me.

Since I neither hate nor fear plaster, the  
suggestion she made [May "Letters"] for  
its expedient use in making cores or humps  
was logical and has proven satisfactory. The  
clay I use and like is shipped a great dis-  
tance and of course plaster is readily avail-  
able and inexpensive. Even I have been  
aware of the condescending attitude con-  
cerning the use of plaster, but have never  
encountered a reason for its general accept-  
ance as an offensive material. I especially  
appreciated learning the reasons Mrs. Per-  
kins gave for its dishonor.

My guess is that courage and good judg-  
ment, as well as sensitivity in teachers, who  
can see beyond the narrow confines of the  
initiates in ceramics, will contribute much to  
awakening appreciation and creativeness  
generally.

And if "pots are made of what we pot-  
ters are"—for those of us who haven't a  
desire to create a snobbish pot—I hope  
there are many more articles by Dorothy  
Perkins, and soon.

KATHERINE L. BARRETT

Lawton, Okla.

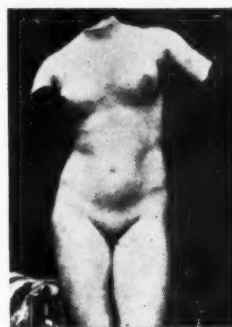
♦ Turn to Page 10—quickly!

Gentlemen:

... The new magazine I find quite in-  
teresting, though the emphasis on so-called  
"free-form" is to me rather like justifying  
the tripe and twaddle that has poured so  
lavishly from the pens of writers, the  
brushes of painters, and the scores of com-  
posers. How long, Oh Lord, how long?  
Still, it undoubtedly meets the popular taste  
so I suppose I can't blame you.

CHARLES A. HARRISON

Lockport, N. Y.



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CERAMICS MONTHLY

# Ceramics

## MONTHLY

Volume 1, Number 6

JUNE • 1953

45 cents per copy

### cover story

On the Decoration of Pottery.....Aaron Bohrod 14

### articles

- What Is Clay?.....Henry Bollman 9  
Sculptural Forms.....Dorothy W. Perkins 10  
Are Lead Glazes Dangerous?.....Edgar Littlefield 25  
Press Molds ..... 26  
Prepare Clay Slip.....Glen Lukens 28

### regular reading

- Advertisers Index ..... 32 New & Useful ..... 7  
Answers to Questions... 20 Profile ..... 22  
Itinerary ..... 6 Show Time ..... 32  
Letters ..... 2 Suggestions ..... 30

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Edgar Littlefield

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Karl Martz  
Dorothy W. Perkins  
Kenneth E. Smith

OUR COVER this month, arranged and executed by Gordon Keith, shows a composite of drawings from the sketch books of Aaron Bohrod.

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### a letter from the editor

#### Dear Reader

This is the season for ceramic shows—and how well we know it!

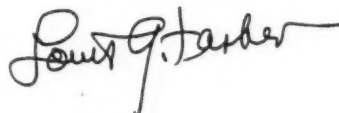
Our office is overflowing (literally) with hundreds of photographs and dozens of write-ups of shows and exhibitions from all over the United States and Canada. The problem of what to do with them, in fact, began to loom larger and larger as they continued to arrive, most of them at our request.

Here, gathered together in one spot, was a pictorial report of ceramic work from all over the country. Here, for the first time, was a comprehensive record of the current work of the hobby craftsman, the student, and the ceramic artist. To the small hobby groups, the material would present an opportunity to compare their work and activities with that of others. Schools could verify the competence of their own departments. In general, ceramists from all walks of ceramic life could learn what's "going on."

To do justice to the bonanza of material which was at hand, however, we would have to set aside at least an entire issue. And that's exactly what we decided to do!

The July issue of "Ceramics Monthly" will be devoted almost exclusively to reporting the current and recent shows and exhibitions. We are unable to cover them all, of course; but we are making an honest selection from the material at hand to bring you a comprehensive bird's-eye view of American ceramics as it exists today as an art, craft, and hobby. We hope you will like it.

Yours sincerely,







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# itinerary

Send your announcements of shows and group meetings to us six weeks to two months in advance. Copy for August issue due June 15.

## WHERE TO SHOW

### CALIFORNIA, Sacramento

July 1-31

Sixth Annual Graphic & Decorative Arts Exhibit will be held in the State Library Prints Room. Artists of Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Mother Lode may submit pottery and small sculpture. No fee; awards to be given. June 18-19 is deadline for entry cards and work. For further details contact Alicia Hook, California State Library, Sacramento 9.

### FLORIDA, Coral Gables

June 15-July 15

A competitive exhibition will be presented at Lowe Gallery, University of Miami. Sponsored by the Ceramic League of Miami. Pottery, porcelain, sculpture, and enamels accepted. Purchase and cash prizes to be announced. For entry information write Mrs. Juanita May, 1953 Tiger Tail Ave., Miami.

### Sarasota

June 29-July 26

The Sarasota Summer Festival of the Arts will have a crafts show as a major activity. Included will be exhibits of handcrafted articles—ceramics, enamel on metal, glass—and demonstrations of processes involved in their making. Well-known craftsmen will demonstrate and lecture. Tool and equipment awards as well as \$750 in cash available as prizes.

### MASSACHUSETTS, Boston

June 7-14

All New England artists—summer residents included—eligible to enter the Second Annual Boston Art Festival, to be held at the Public Gardens. No fee. Prizes to be awarded. For information regarding entries, contact the Boston Art Festival Committee, 38 Newbury St.

### Gloucester

June 21-September 13

North Shore Art Association will hold its 31st annual show at E. Main St. Galleries. All artists eligible. Entry condition: payment of \$10 membership dues. Sculpture. There will be a jury; prizes given. June 5 deadline for entry cards and work. For further information contact L. Edmund Klotz, Ledge Rd.

## WHERE TO GO

### CALIFORNIA, Sacramento

Through June 28

The Kingsley Art Club's annual exhibition, at Crocker Art Gallery, includes sculpture and crafts. Exhibitors are residents of the Central Valleys. Prizes to be given.

### COLORADO, Denver

June 15-August 2

Ceramists west of Mississippi, Illinois, and Wisconsin are entered in the 59th Annual Exhibition of the Denver Art Museum, Schleier Galleries. Purchase prizes. Museum's address: 1343 Acoma St.

### CONNECTICUT, Norwalk

June 12-July 6

Residents or natives of New England will compete in the Silvermine Guild of Artists All New England Show. Sculpture. Cash prizes. For information contact Revington Arthur, Chairman.

### ILLINOIS, Chicago

Current

"Good Design" show. At the Chicago Merchandise Mart.

### INDIANA, Indianapolis

Through June 14

The Second Biennial Indiana Ceramic Exhibition, at the John Herron Art Museum, Pennsylvania & 16th Sts. Open to Indiana amateurs and professionals, the show includes vases, bowls, tableware, decorative plaques, ceramic sculpture, and enamel-on-metal work.

### NEW JERSEY, West Long Branch

June 22

The New Jersey Society of Ceramic Arts, a newly formed group, will hear an address by Mrs. Nadine Weiss, the group's president, at the regular monthly meeting. Topic: "Individual Style & Technique in Pottery."

### NEW YORK, Rochester

Through June 7

The 1953 Rochester Finger Lakes Exhibit now at Memorial Art Gallery. Artists and craftsmen from Monroe and 18 surrounding New York counties entered. Pottery and sculpture. Prizes will be given.

### NORTH CAROLINA, Asheville

July 20-24

The Sixth Annual Craftsman's Fair of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild at City Auditorium. Pottery and enamels.

### OREGON, Portland

Through June 20

The Fourth Annual Exhibit of Northwest Ceramics. Oregon Ceramic Studio, 3934 S.W. Corbett Ave. Pottery, sculpture, and enamels by ceramists from Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington being shown.

### VERMONT, Rutland

June 6-August 10

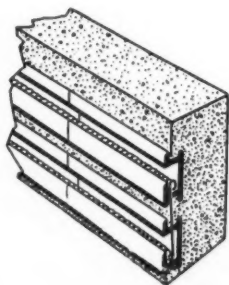
Mid-Vermont Artists' Summer Exhibit. At Rutland Free Library. All former members over high school age (regardless of address), all Vermont residents, and any summer resident within 50-mile radius of Rutland eligible. Small sculpture among mediums. Award.

## new & useful

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Rental of the print is \$2, the sale price \$30. It's obtainable at the International Film Bureau, Inc., 57 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago 4. Mention CERAMICS MONTHLY when writing.

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"SNOW" AND "RAIN," two new glaze effects, are now available in white, blue, yellow, and black from the Madge Tummins Ceramic Studio, 726 Hill St., Grand Prairie, Texas. They are powders sprinkled dry over glazed surfaces immediately after glaze application to produce snow-flake and rain-drop effects. The new materials are claimed to be greatly improved, as they can be sprinkled on vertical sides. For further information write directly to Madge Tummins, and please mention CERAMICS MONTHLY.

"NEW FASHIONS for Figurines" is a new book by Hazel Martin. It contains detailed information on porcelain lace dolls including pictures, patterns, tips and tricks. For further information write to the American Beauty Ceramic Studio, 15648 Euclid Ave., East Cleveland 12, Ohio. Please mention CERAMICS MONTHLY when writing.

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If you have a product or a service you feel will be of interest to the readers of "Ceramics Monthly," send the pertinent information and illustrations (if available) to the attention of the Editor, "Ceramics Monthly," 3494 N. High St., Columbus 14, Ohio.

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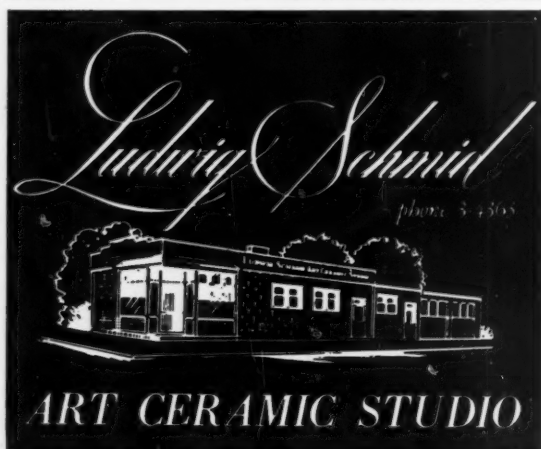
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# WHAT IS CLAY?

by

Henry Bollman

IF the Inquiring Reporter should slap you playfully on the back some fine day and ask, with notebook poised, "What is Life?" what would you say, if anything? Though you may have lived Life a long time, could you answer that question, or would you tell the Inquirer, in a few choice Elizabethan words to let you alone, and go to the place reserved for such people?

What is clay? is the same kind of a question . . . just as hard to answer. If you would ask it of a Midwestern farmer who has a lot of it on his land, he would say it is a nuisance; and he too might speak in the picturesque idiom of good Queen Bess, saying how little he thought of the stuff. Or if you should ask a chemist, seated behind his test tubes, he would probably yawn, and dismiss you with the simple statement, "It is an hydrous silicate of alumina." Finally, if you would come to me, a practical potter (with an unusually low I. Q.), I would blurt out, "I dunno." This might cause you to raise an eyebrow, look at me through your lorgnettes, and ask icily, "How, my good man, can you have the temerity to call yourself a potter if you . . . as you say so illiterately . . . dunno?"

Well, it's like this. After I had lived with clay for some years, and thought that I knew something about it, I chanced to see a weighty volume on the subject of clay. Though the book was bristling with formulas and equations

too complicated for me to grasp, I was impressed by the fact that, though the author was 80 years old when he wrote the book, and had spent 50 of those years in research on the 2,000 or more varieties of clay in the U. S. A., he could not fully answer the question, "What is clay?"

He used up 600 pages to say it, with innumerable qualifications, and it sounded like false modesty to me until I had done more research on my own account. I haunted some of the stuffiest reading rooms in the scientific libraries in Boston.

My excursion into the sacred, albeit dusty, field of pure science left me bewildered and baffled. I picked up a lump of clay, studied it with awe, and said, "How can you be so hard to understand? You and I have been friends for a long time. What are you hiding?"

**THE CLAY**, which is so expressive in other ways, had not the power to speak to me; but, as it bent in my hand, I felt again, as I had so often in the past, that life-giving quality known as plasticity.

I turned to my research notes on the subject of plasticity, and found that therein lies one of the major unanswered questions about this fascinating material.

It appears that clay is the only material in nature which possesses plasticity in the natural state. Plasticity is that characteristic which makes it possible to bend or shape clay in various forms, without breaking up or destroying the continuity of the substance as a whole. You can bend it, and it stays bent. This quality is what makes pottery possible. Without it, there would



be no pots, and no potters. (Civilization could not do without the first, but could survive without the latter!)

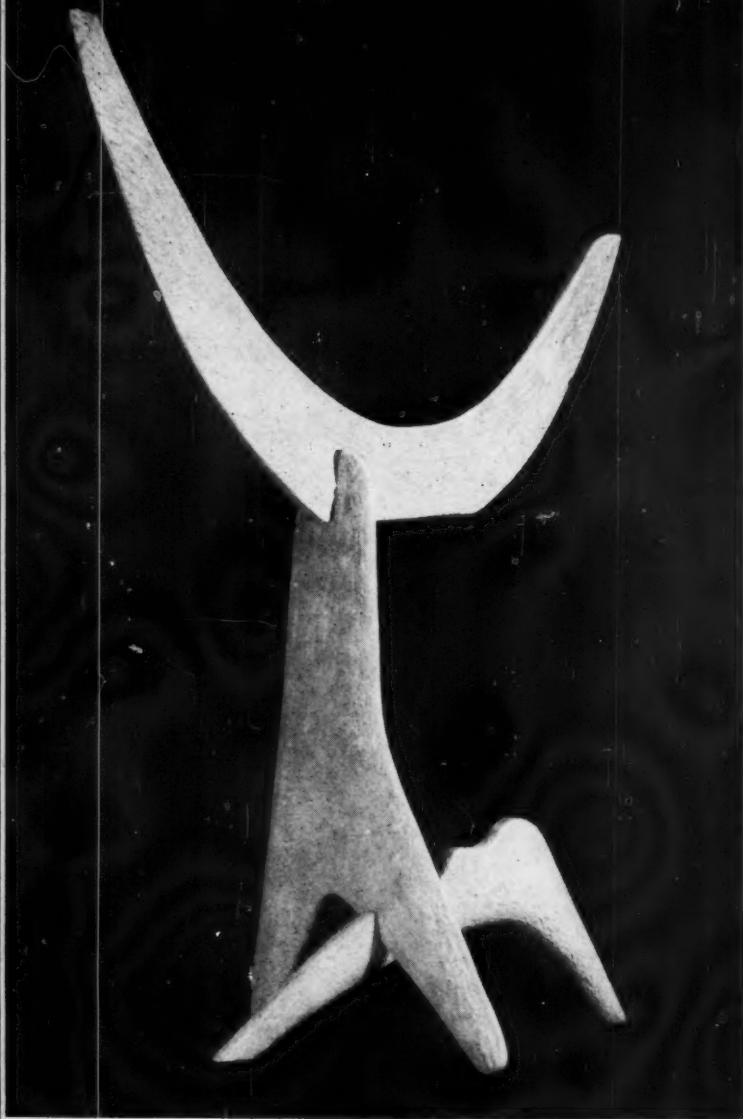
Rubber is somewhat plastic, but it does not correspond to clay because, though it will spring and give, it will not retain its new shape unless held by some external means.

So what? you may ask.

In plasticity lies a secret of clay which nature has never fully disclosed to any of the scientists whose works I

(Please turn to Page 31)

Mr. Bollman owns and operates the Henry Bollman Potteries, East Gloucester, Mass. He is a CERAMICS MONTHLY Contributing Editor.



# sculptural forms

by DOROTHY W. PERKINS

fourth in a series of  
articles on free form

**A** SYMMETRIC forms are all sculptural forms in the sense that they are not restricted in any dimension. Wheel thrown forms, for example, are round, though it is true they may be altered after throwing. Asymmetric forms may have round portions, but roundness is not dictated: it may be utilized at the discretion of the designer. Drain cast forms have walls of equal thicknesses, produced by the method of forming, but the walls or portions of asymmetric forms may vary in thickness and direction. Coil-built pots which are of symmetric nature are usually of even wall thicknesses. The designer of free forms, on the other hand, has great freedom in his composition. He usually desires some variation in the walls to give greater visual as well as physical strength to his work. This is as true of small, open pressed forms as it is of the forms shown here.

The problems to be met in low or in closed asymmetric forms, previously discussed (*CERAMICS MONTHLY*, March), are very similar to those arising in the creation of purely sculptural forms. Low and closed forms are usually designed for utilitarian purposes, but it is important to note that a piece designed for pleasurable view-



ing is just as "useful" as one designed to hold flowers or food. Pieces designed to bring pleasure merely by observance are just as functional as utilitarian forms. The value in purely sculptural shapes is in the pleasure they give by stimulating the imaginations of the creator and the observer.

The creation of sculptural forms is important not only to the potter but to all. The potter may, indeed, feel that experiments in sculptural form are quite far afield of what he is trying to do. Such experiments are, however, important to him as another way of expressing form, a way which may have a surprising influence on his other work. The expression of form is valuable to every person.

Two-dimensional art is learned early in life, whether it is the life of a civilization or the life of an individual. It is learned through stick in sand or pencil on paper. But it is usually when one starts using his hands in the construction of toys, shacks, or crude instruments that he begins to think three-dimensionally.

Mrs. Perkins is Ceramic Instructor in the Division of Fine Arts, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, R. I.

Although ever surrounded by three-dimensionality, he does not encompass forms mentally. He sees them and depicts them two-dimensionally. There is, therefore, more need of working and thinking three-dimensionally early in life: to consider not *surface*, but *form*. Objects are to be seen in space and in relation to other objects in space. Our progress will find three dimensionality playing an increasingly dominant role because it is through the physical structure and chemical qualities of matter that we build toward the future.

**T**HERE are, in general, two ways of considering form today. One is form in motion, as in the case of transportation facilities, a mobile, or some power driven equipment. The other is form that retains motion within itself, such as furniture, dinner ware, or a piece of sculpture. There are also forms which are sometimes in motion, sometimes static. While moving forms may provide us with inspiration, there is a place for static forms in our world.

The zest for "streamlining" has overcome many designers and is often superfluous. There is a reason for streamlining an airplane or an automobile—perhaps even a building—if it cuts down wind resistance. There is not much reason for so treating chairs or

sculptural forms. Their functional purposes may require simplification, but not the illusion of speed. The qualities of objects should express their intent, including motion or non-motion.

The designer of a sculptural form, then, may first be concerned with expressing the static quality of the form. It is his intent to produce a form which appears "freed," and not to produce a leaden, sodden mass. Second, he may be concerned with giving to the form, though static, life and a sense of movement within itself. One way to accomplish this is by stressing movement *around*, rather than emphasizing "front" and "back." Another way is by stressing interest *through* as well as around. Both ideas may be most vital to the emergence of a pleasing form.

Forms of nature provide inspiration for the type of sculptural form discussed here, just as they do for other asymmetric forms. Man is a form of nature from which sculpture often evolves. It is not our place, here, to consider portrait heads or commemorative figures, but rather to consider the artist's selective privilege in his expression of man's form. It is his privilege, as a designer, to use the elements of the figure in whatever way is best suited to the creative task.



"SPEARMAN," left, a solid sculpture of reduced red grogged clay with lustered tunic and wood spear, is ten inches tall. By Arthur Roy. "REINDEER" is the title of the interlocking free form at upper left (opposite page). The piece is of formed slabs of white grogged clay with fired-in metallic colorants. By L. N. Perkins, it's 26 inches high. "BOY WITH A DOG," lower right of opposite page, is solid sculpture of buff grogged clay with sigillatta treatment. Figure and animal are separate pieces, self-locking at point of contact. Height: 16 inches. Also by L. N. Perkins.



"FEMALE": solid sculpture of fine-grained white clay with colored semi-opaque glaze and metal rod inserts (right). The creation is 15 inches high. By John Cipot. "TWO FIGURES" (far right): attached bent slabs of red grogged clay with engobed areas. Height: 22 inches. By Warren Maxfield. AMUSING "Man Bottles" (lower left) are coil-built hollow forms of red grogged clay with engobe and sigillatta treatments. Heights: 10 and 36 inches. By John Cipot. "CONSTRUCTION" (lower right): Built up form of red grogged clay with metallic colors fired into heavily textured surface. Height: 30 inches. By Warren Maxfield.



SOME of the forms shown here were started in press molds, as described in earlier articles. After the initial pressing operation, the form may grow upward, or even downward, by the addition of clay in pieces, coils, or slabs. It is sometimes necessary to make inner structural braces of coils of clay to hold the growing form until it stiffens. These may be removed when they are no longer needed. In some cases, however, such braces become an integral and permanent part of the design. It is also frequently necessary to brace the form temporarily from the outside.

Here, as in the building of closed asymmetric shapes, it is perhaps helpful to build the structure a bit heavier than is intended for the finished work, giving more strength while the clay is plastic. This will allow for some subtraction of weight in the finishing of the form.

The designer is faced with the problems of negative areas and their importance, with the expression of a sense of growth, and with the avoidance of weight and a clumsy aspect, particularly around the base. He is furthermore concerned that his sculpture shall not have a fussiness about it, that he shall present a clean, well-defined form.

Much of the achievement of a clean, well-defined form lies in meeting the mechanical problems of working, drying, and firing the clay. Meeting the mechanical problems requires, however, more than mere reading about them.

It requires patience and practice on the part of the individual. A clay body of the type described in Article III of this series will help.

SCULPTURAL forms should be dried slowly, and care should be taken that the base section or sections are not stuck to the surface on which the work is done. If they are not cut free (and it is often necessary to do this many times), the work will crack as it begins to dry and shrink. If the piece is large and heavy, it may also be advisable to set it on a bed of sand or flint, as soon as it has stiffened sufficiently, so that it may move more easily as it dries.

It is often desirable to do some finishing after the form has dried. This may be done intentionally, as some textural effects are more readily accomplished on dry clay. Rasping the surface with a coarse shoemaker's rasp is one way of arriving at a "surface." A finer rasp may be desired, or a piece of hacksaw blade may be used. The rasping of planes will frequently leave very sharp edges on the form. These are usually softened by light rasping, sanding or sponging, so that the form will not be metallic in appearance. If the form is to be glazed, sharp edges may also lead to the movement of the glaze away from the edges. Sometimes the very nature of the work seems to call for sharp, decisive edges, but if they are desired, some treatment other than glazing may give better results.

In the firing of the piece—whether it is a bisque fire or glaze—any sculptural form of much weight should be bedded in sand, flint, or fire clay. In some cases it is further necessary to support the piece in firing. Soft insulating brick may be so used, provided it is not set in such a way that the work will shrink against it. If this were done, the piece would crack.

There are many treatments which are appropriate to a sculptural form. If a white or light colored clay body is used, it may be desirable to stain the body. An overload of stain may give the clay some sheen when fired, even though not covered with glaze. Glazing may be done on either the entire form or portions of it.

A very glossy glaze is not usually best suited to asymmetric forms, since it creates many highlights which may make the form too active. If a glaze is desired, a semi-mat or mat glaze will probably give the best effect. An overspray of the same glaze in a different color may be used to accent the form. A semi-transparent glaze over underglaze color is often effective. The underglaze color may be painted or sprayed on in areas, painted in a brush pattern, applied in rather delicate line with underglaze pencil or crayon, or sprayed on in such a way as to accentuate the form. If the form has a surface textured by rasping, underglaze color, mixed with a little flux, may be effectively rubbed into the textured surface. This may be covered with a semi-trans-

parent glaze or left unglazed. If it is left unglazed, the underglaze color needs more flux so that it will not rub off the finished piece.

**ENGOBES** may also be used. It is sometimes desirable to make the inner portions of a form quite different in color—and even in texture—from the outside. This could be accomplished by the use of an engobe. Since engobes are usually quite dry after firing (unless highly fluxed), it probably would be best to use a glaze in conjunction with them. Dry surfaces are not always undesirable, but it is true that they are dust catchers! Engobes may be effectively used in areas or over the entire form if the body color is undesirable.

There are some treatments which do not involve glazing. One of these is reduction firing, which changes the color of the clay body—usually graying it. Another is intentional flashing in a kiln not muffled, where the flames can be made to play against the form. It is

also possible to grind the surface after firing to maturity, in much the same way as "terrazza" floors are ground. This puts a very smooth surface on the form and may be done by hand with an emery stone—and plenty of energy! A power tool will save some of the energy. A form, whether it has been glazed or not, may be sandblasted in part or in whole. A glazed piece may also be etched by hydrofluoric acid or commercial etching compounds.

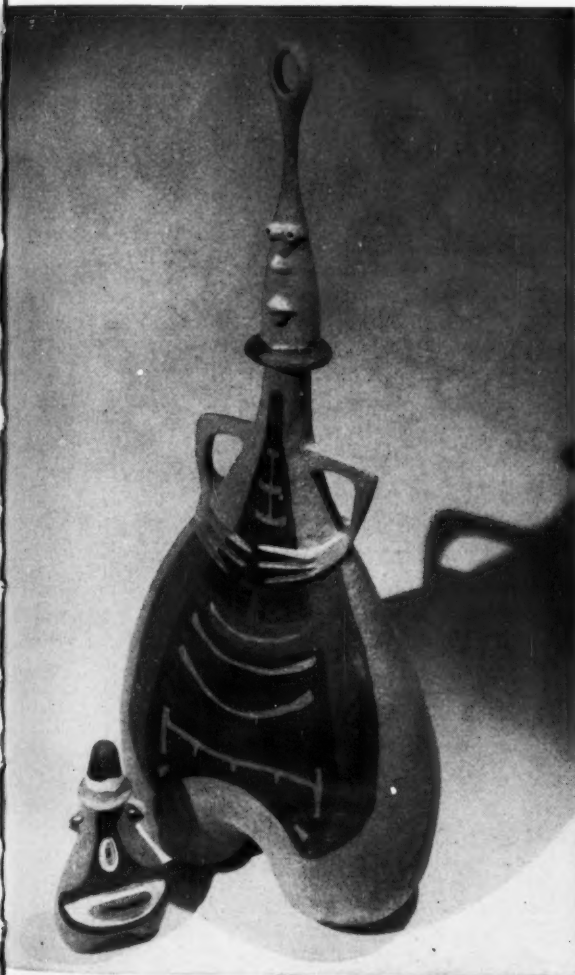
Another suggestion is the use of a wax on the surface of the form. This may be self-polishing or paste wax, colorless. Or it may be desirable to give the form more color than the clay alone offers. In this case, shoe polishes work well. The colorless waxes will not give very good effects on roughly textured surfaces, but the colored ones will, giving deeper color where they fill the texture.

In short, there are no "rules" about sculptural form. Whatever treatment best serves the artist's conception is legitimate, providing it also serves any

physical requirements. The latter include, for example, resistance to freezing and thawing in pieces for garden use.

**SCULPTURAL** form study provides a paralleling or continuing experience to that of other "free forms." It is not, however, a simple "phase" of form study—not an isolated experience or development. Experiencing three-dimensional forms is an educational problem, one met most fully through working the material. We may read of, or look at, the three-dimensional work of others, but it is through creating it ourselves that we are able to *know* it.

Art without *doing* may perhaps be termed art *unknown*. Art's greatest purpose—that of education—is lost by mere surface recognition or acceptance. The potter, and others as well, needs to *think* three-dimensionally—even in making sketches on paper—and sculptural experiments will aid in strengthening his ability to do so. ●



COVER  
STORY

# on the DECORATION of POTTERY



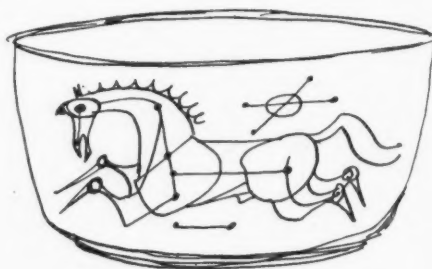
DECORATION on a pot should respect form and expand the potential of form. Decoration may hew to the lines of the pot or on occasion "fight" contours of the pot in an exciting way. Never should it float on the surface, digress, or live in any way apart from the pot.

Before I delve deeper into the realm of philosophy (department of decoration), I should warn the reader that my views on this subject may be unorthodox. The established teacher of ceramics may advise other thought processes for the approach to decorating problems, if indeed he encourages the use of embellishment at all. Even if I make out a fairly good case for my own approach, I will not mean to imply that other avenues are invalid or inappropriate. I would imagine that there are as many valid approaches to decorating a pot as there are to solving a pictorial problem on canvas.

In a recent issue of *CERAMICS MONTHLY* (March, Page 25) a Chinese saying is quoted relative to slip decoration: "A leaf touched twice with the brush dies." My own feeling is that what is most important is that not a leaf but

a pot be brought to life. A good pot cannot crash under the weight of two overlapping strokes of a brush. A good pottery form is the product of inspired skill, tender nurturing, or uncommon luck. In my way of thinking, spontaneity is a greatly overstressed element of pottery decoration. In most cases the single virtuoso stroke does not appear to be compatible with the growth of the pot itself. While there may be times when with great fortune and skill a clean sweeping stroke or an adroit squiggle does bring accented life to a pottery piece, all too often it reminds me of those casually rhythmical calligraphic paintings which pompously provoke the feeling that the artist believes he can do no wrong.

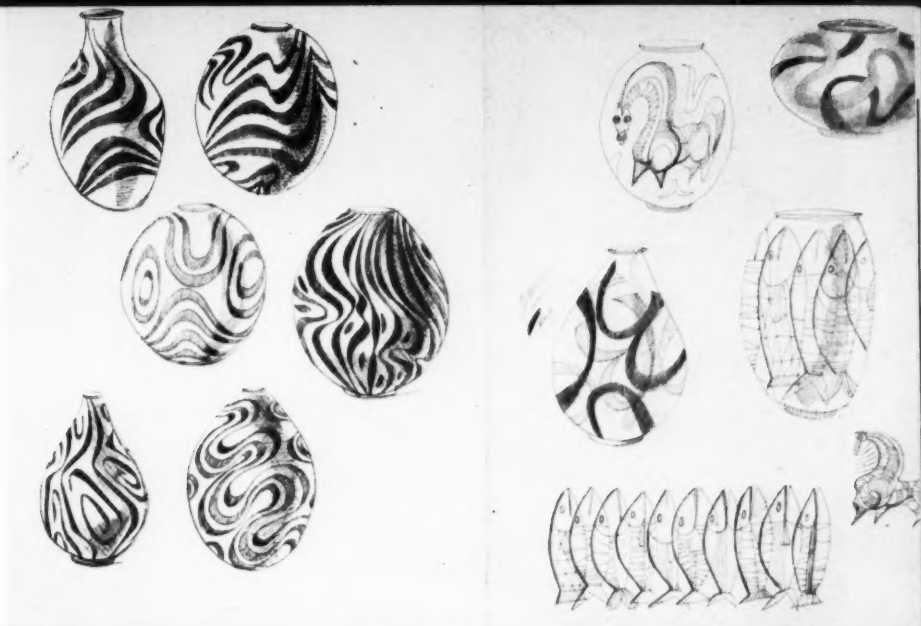
Manual dexterity does not supply the place of true emotion. I would much rather see a humble, fumbling,



Mr. Bohrod, one of America's distinguished painters, is known in the ceramic field for his decoration of the pottery thrown by Carlton Ball. He holds the post of Artist-in-Residence at the University of Wisconsin.



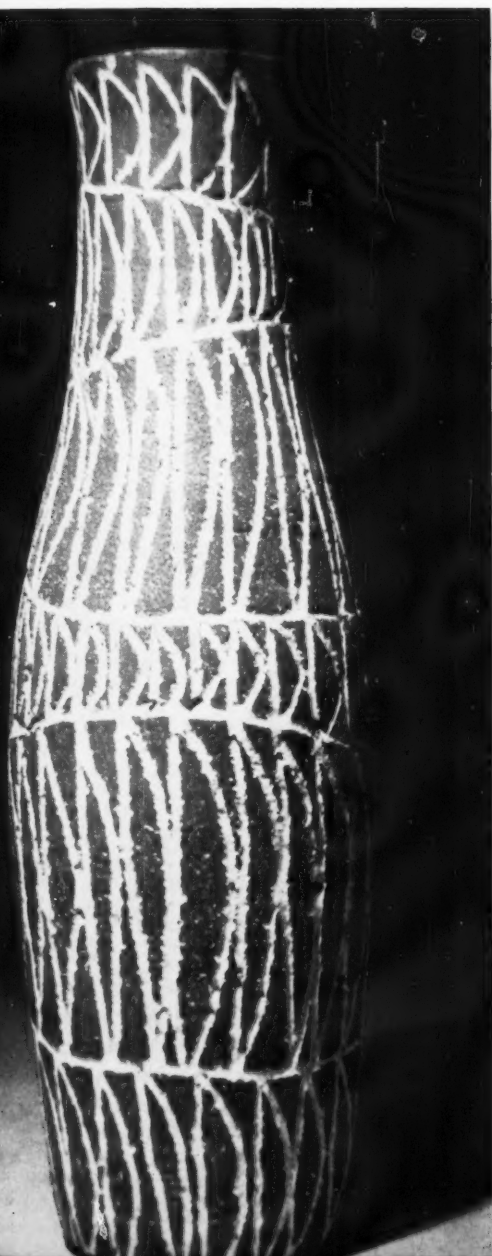
by  
AARON  
BOHROD



SKETCH BOOK PAGES above are but two of the hundreds Aaron Bohrod has filled with his decorating ideas and which help point up his "plea" for "lavishness of sketch thinking." About the sketch page at the left Bohrod says, "Some of these designs tease the structure that is intended to hold them. In several of these the decoration purports to create an illusory sensation by bending in and bulging away from the actual contour of the pot. Whether the end results would be as rewarding as the designer hopes must wait upon the final execution."



UPWARD MOVEMENT of tall pot at left is retarded by erratically spaced striations of "orange slice" pattern. Varied repetition of a simple device is supported by the soundly proportioned piece. Brown-tinted and heavily grogged, the pot is incised with a deep, almost ragged line, into which was sponged a shiny white glaze.



hesitant line which at least explores the surface it rests on or digs into. Better than that, of course, is the inspired line, neither faltering nor brash, which marries itself to the pot and fully exploits its shape; a line which is alive to the turn and dictates of the pot's particular personality—or perhaps reacts against the pot by zigging when the pot zags; not disregarding the pot, but playing in conscious counterpoint to it.

Many potters and ceramic students make choice among their green and bisque ware for pots to decorate and pots to handle in the all-over glazed manner. In most cases they set aside their most successful pieces for glazing which will be "uncorrupted" by decoration. A pot can be a thing of simple beauty and satisfaction without employing the decorative possibilities inherent in the ceramic art. But over the span of much production the potter's art becomes delimited. He denies himself possibilities which are infinite. Pottery can contain within its own limits elements of both painting and sculpture: form, color, and design. It may also have inner meanings and symbolic purport. Or it may be light-hearted and playful. To place circumscribed limits on pottery from puristic notions is, in my opinion, a sad mistake. And it is unseemly on the part of ceramic artists ungifted in decoration to decry all decoration (except perhaps historic examples) and make virtue of inherent lack.



EACH FACET of the vase at left is decorated with birds above and simplified nudes below. An interesting zig-zag secondary pattern gives a certain unity to the pot and serves as foil to the flattened planes. A runny inlaid glaze softens the pot's hard lines and angles. The smaller pot to the right is an example of decoration which



grasps for interest by reacting against the vase contour but is consciously withheld. SEVEN NUDES offer a consistent surface for the tall lamp-base form at the far right above. These were "borrowed" from the sketch book page shown to the right, on Page 17. A dark glaze was rubbed into the lines, and a turquoise mat sprayed overall.

IF, however, the potter has not the feeling for the discipline of decoration or after sincere efforts to master the art succeeds only in ruining the skillful shapes he turns out, he should devote himself to the glazed, undecorated pot and derive the lesser though still sometimes high satisfactions which may ensue. Decoration can never be neutral. It either helps a pot or hurts it. If the pot will not be enhanced, much better let it be as it is, rather than allow it to suffer the watering-down of anemic adornment.

In the division of unfinished ware into goats for embellishment and sheep for the "pure" treatment, the potter errs. The better the basic pot, the greater the potential for total beauty with the added life of sensitive decoration. The potter who uses decoration only to cover up lack of quality in his structure never really disguises the underlying fault and, further, denies himself the inspiration gained by working on an intrinsically beautiful shape.

In my own pottery work, which depends for existence on collaboration with the noted ceramic artist F. Carlton Ball (see CERAMICS MONTHLY, May), I have the advantage of working on pottery forms which have basic tingling

beauty and which offer inspiration for the enhancement and completion of the forms. There are potters who by dint of work and overwork, by the ultra-polishing and refinement of their efforts can leave nothing to be said in the way of decoration. It is impossible to extend a pot which has already been over-extended by a too nice refinement. Carlton Ball's work with me stops at a point where the pot flourishes in its full unaffected vigor but still contains the challenge for adventurous completion by decoration.

How does one proceed with the decoration of a pot? Is the decoration planned at the moment the potter's hands guide his clay to the elusive center of the throwing wheel, or does he throw his pot and let it suggest decoration to him on its tentative completion in the green state? The living source material for the decorated ware which Carlton Ball and I produce is the storehouse of drawings contained in numberless sketch books of notions, ideas, doodles, half-completed thoughts, carefully finished designs, design motifs for possible use when the right pot comes along, and so on.

Two basic plans are carried forward in our collaboration. On the one hand, the designs are inspected and certain shapes that are demanded for specific projects are supplied by Carlton Ball with characteristic grace and ease. The second general approach is for my partner to throw pottery on any scale and in any form which his creative instincts evoke at the moment. These forms are then studied as to the best ways of adding interest and possible beauty, and are carried out in a variety of decorating techniques.

A POT is held in the decorator's hands. It may be squat and squarish. It may be tall and undulating. The decorator may take the squat pot and decide to accentuate its low bulk, or he may decide to oppose its natural stature by suggested elongation of applied pattern. He may, in

AN ARMADILLO fills the hollow center space of this shallow bowl while the lip echoes something of the triangular impulse on the interior design. The animal seems to rotate counter-clockwise as the outside moves clockwise.



staccato notes, create facades for the pot, integrated or not by a secondary device. He may use an abstract pattern or he may think, "Wouldn't the bulge of this pot be just the thing on which to place, say, a series of strange turtles?"

He considers the graceful pot: would accentuating its grace give him something too pretty? Does it need a sobering rigidity to bring it down to earth? Should he stress its elongation or should he create his pattern in horizontal layers to modify its length? Nobody can say for certain what any given pot demands. Solutions are numerous though, naturally, not equally rewarding.

The decorator develops a sharpened subjective response and very often can only explain his reasons for doing what he has done through a kind of strained rationalization. But something in the pot has set off something in the artist. He has developed a new kind of inner ear. The pot whispers

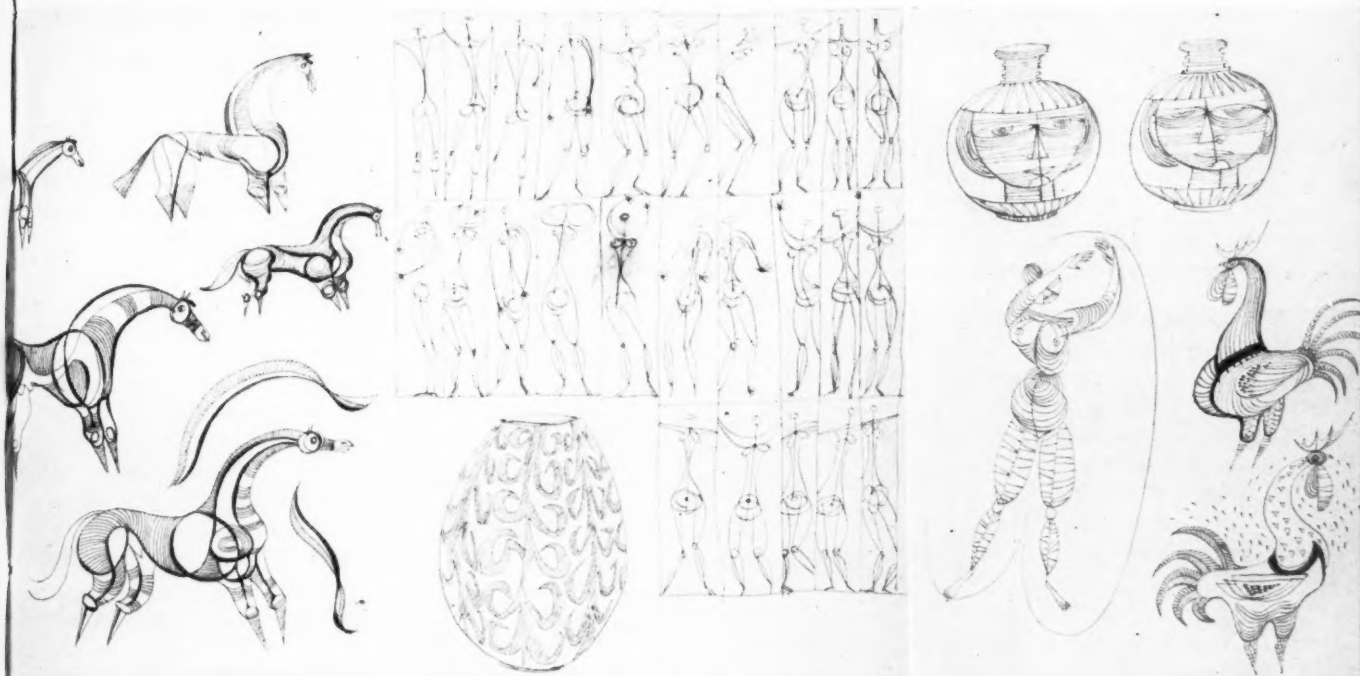
INDIVIDUAL PAGES from the "files" hold Bohrod's ideas until he is ready to put them to use. About the horses Bohrod says, "The mildly fantastic twist to natural form will make easily possible the application of these animals to many different pottery shapes.

This is held in mind under the decorating process, as only subtle contrasts of color can usually be obtained with all the means at our disposal. Even limited color changes are exploited for all they are worth, however.

Ideas for decorating abound in the proportion that the artist is powerful in invention, is visually sensitive to his surroundings, or is at least clever in the adaption of the ideas of other artists. It is difficult to frown on the potter who takes his ideas where he finds them, if he injects something of his personality into the modification of a borrowed scheme for adaptation to clay. If, though, he depends for too great part on such borrowing, he will not develop that personality in his medium which is the hallmark of a distinctive style.

The most powerful decorators will rely on their own peculiar gifts for invention to furnish the backbone of their creative ideas. But however inventive the decorator is,

Around the bottom horse is suggested a secondary design, germane, it is hoped, to the primary motif." From the 25 nudes in the panels (center below), seven were "borrowed" to enhance the lampbase shown on the opposite page.



to the decorator or it clamors at him. The pot dictates the decoration.

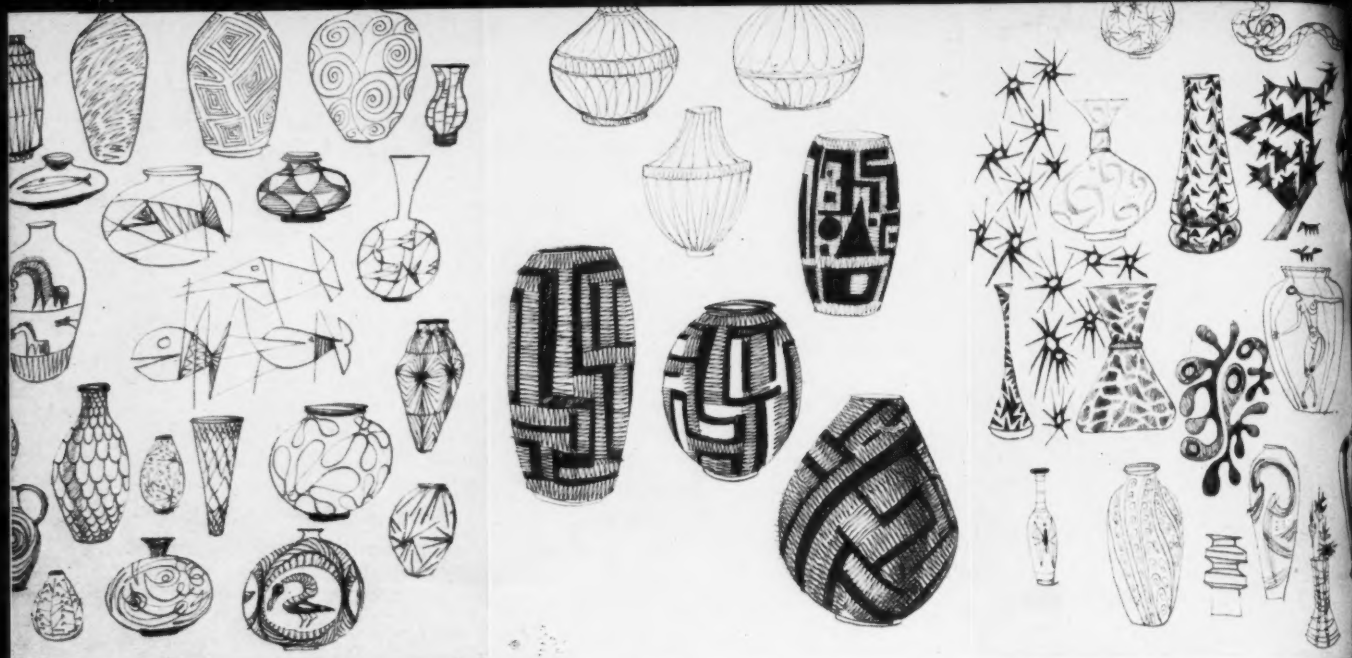
The pot may also incite the method by which the decoration is applied. A strong groggy pot may impel the artist to employ a contrasting clay inlay (*mishima*); a lyrical pot may suggest the delicacy of a clean, precise sgraffito treatment, a smashing big pot may demand—so that the decoration may not be outweighed—the modified splash of oxide colors over a glaze, or a full-bodied glaze over contrasting glaze method.

Since the concern of our collaboration is exclusively with high fired stoneware, color change, of necessity, counts for somewhat less than vigorous linear and area design.

he periodically needs the refreshment of a return to natural form for keeping his decorative instincts alive and fertile.

Much of the pottery decoration we see today, especially that produced or partially produced by painters who, like me, have crashed the potter's gates, is in the nature of a painting done on a vase or a plate. This kind of thing could as well or better be done on a piece of paper or on canvas, especially when the painter's usual ceramic surface is fragile earthenware. The novelty of the medium and the often high prominence of the artist seem to substitute for an understanding of what the art of pottery decoration entails: a blending of design form and design decoration into one indivisible art object.





"A HODGE-PODGE ASSORTMENT of doodled ideas" is the way Bohrod refers to the sketch book page at left and right above. He adds, "A few of these might possibly work out as finished pottery. Even the briefest sketch idea can inform the artist whether a thought is worth pursuing further or whether it may just as well die 'aborn-

ing.'" In the center is a page which starts off in a light tracery vein and suddenly changes mood to almost a brutal boldness. Bohrod comments, "Above, delicate insized or sgraffito lines can probably do the work of translation into clay. Below, wide ribbons of oxide color or glaze will have to be called on."

VERY TALL POT shown below and in the making with author Bohrod in the photograph on top left of the facing page he calls "Clown Pot." "This hovers dangerously close to pictures on a pot, but perhaps is saved by the all-over feeling of evenly weighted but varied relationships."



I AM aware that many potters will not be caught dead with a preconceived plan or sketch at their side when about to embellish a piece of pottery. With these potters there is a feeling that getting one's ideas down on paper causes one to "leave his fight in the gym"; that once having solved a design problem the application of the solution to the actual material causes a lack of spontaneity. This may be true if the potter slavishly transfers the sketch to the pot. No matter how thoroughly worked out a design may be beforehand, the potter must be alert to consider the demands of the three-dimensional form with which he is concerned. He improvises, changes his mind, goes along with or counters a dip or bulge he could not be aware of when he set down his preliminary conception. He is no slave to the pot, but he must give the form respectful attention.

When his storehouse of material is rich and varied, he can never be at a loss for decoration subject matter. But a potter who ponders in perpetual perplexity, "What can I possibly do to decorate this pot?" is as pathetic as the painter who asks, "What can I think of to paint?"

Implications hinted at by a pottery form can be resolved in a number of ways. The problem should be one which stems from a plethora of rich source material, so one may be torn between the potentially beautiful effect of one device as against an equally enticing prospect offered by another.

Despite all the advance material an artist might prepare, there may always come along a fresh and exciting pot which calls forth some response that no stored up idea can supply. This pot may tax powers of invention and give rise to heights the artist never knew he could attain. Often in my collaboration with Carlton Ball have my own abilities





**AQUARIUM-LIKE ATMOSPHERE** (above center) is achieved by an informal distribution of large fish forms. It is seconded by a small snail or wave symbol laid almost regularly around the prime motif. Copper carbonate oxide color rubbed into deeply grooved lines pours out of bounds into a light glaze to create a murky green. **FISH MOTIF** at right looks almost as if it had been cut into wood. Bold lines and areas were scraped away from a slip overlay.

been so taxed, with results that are among the most satisfying.

But I believe the sketch book notion is the only sound way to induce an outpouring of ideas. More plans than one can profitably put to use; projects which may be impossible of attainment as well as those projects which have definite applicable use—all should go into the potter's sketch books.

It is often sad to see the poverty of invention disclosed on pottery employing unvaried repetition of a single device over and over again. When it is the designer's idea to create an all-over effect by repetition, he can carry out his thought in the much less mechanical way of an inventive, flowing diversity within the repetition. As a matter of fact, much decoration is the embellishment of the pot by repetition of suitable devices so that an even strong or delicate realization of surface is accomplished.

The most interesting pot is one which when turned in the hands or when walked around will, in its decorative aspects, relate to all parts of itself and to the form. Inventive variety held within the framework of the general scheme makes rewarding the view of all the pot's surface.

The pot which on one side is exactly the same as on the other is a lazy piece of work.

**SOME** potters advocate multiple production (not mechanical reproduction, which is something else): the same decoration on approximately the same type of pot, on the principle that one pot out of such a group will be outstanding. This is coupled with the feeling that a good design idea is too rare to "waste" on a single pot. Working out a single design which can be applied to a whole series of pots of the same general shape can only, it seems to me, result in stifling the unconstrained flow of ideas which the art of pottery needs for continual growth. One does not "use up" ideas. Successful employment of a design or decorating idea can only induce further ingenuity, whereas even limited repetition of a single decorative idea can tend to make the potter think of the economy of stretching a single thought as far as it can go.

For the artist potter I think the ideal is the unique pot. I will not go so far as to say that the potter must never, on pain of eternal damnation, repeat an effort when considerations of economics compel him to do so. But his principal concern should be to push outward the frontiers of his craft, to seek ever richer means for expressing himself through his art. The road to this expansion can well be paved with one unique pot after another. ●

**NO HELP** was the sketch book when searching for a decoration to suit this teapot. A twisting blue and brown line was finally slashed over a speckled white glaze. The color was smudged with a finger, and an associated rhythm was scratched through to the bisque.



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## answers to questions

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*Q. What is the best way to color a white clay slip? Will color addition affect the casting properties?*

A. You can use the normal ceramic color oxides or carbonates, if you wish, but these should be ground into the white slip by ball milling. This will assure you of a homogeneous color rather than a speckled body. If you do not have a ball mill, fairly good results can be obtained by using dry underglaze colors instead of the pure oxides.

The addition of colorant will have no effect on the casting properties of the slip.

*Q. Can an ordinary printer prepare decals?*

A. Making ceramic decals is a printing process using ceramic materials and is not the type of job an ordinary printer would attempt.

*Q. Why will cast flat plates crack when fired in one kiln but not in another?*

A. The plates may be cracking during the drying, though the crack may not be visible without close inspection. The minute cracks will open wide when the plate is fired. Also, if the plates are made too thin or stacked improperly or fired too fast, they will certainly crack.

If they crack in one kiln only, the kiln is firing too fast.

*Q. What is the proper temperature and method to fire pearl lustre?*

A. Cone 018 is the generally accepted firing temperature for most overglaze colors; however, the manufacturer should be consulted for proper directions. The initial firing should be slow, and the door should be left open slightly to allow the vapors to escape.

*Q. Can the chemicals in the local water upset the deflocculation of a casting slip?*

A. Ordinarily, the salts dissolved in city water will not noticeably upset the deflocculation of a slip. If the water is extremely "hard," it may introduce difficulties.

*Q. How can I prevent my pearl-lustre from crazing?*

A. Your difficulty is not in the crazing of the lustre but rather crazing of the glaze upon which the lustre is being used. The craze pattern of the glaze shows through the lustre. It is probable that the crazing was not obvious in the glaze itself, but was made more noticeable by the addition of the lustre.

Direct your questions to Questions Editor, "Ceramics Monthly," 3494 N. High St., Columbus 14, Ohio. Please enclose a stamped reply envelope. Questions of general interest will appear in this column.

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## PROFILE

# Leza McVey



THE uninitiated for one reason or another are inclined to accept somewhat blindly the idea that hand forming is for beginners while the wheel is the "graduate school" of the ceramic artist. Perhaps this misconception exists because the order given is the normal progression in learning pottery making. Leza S. McVey, well-known Michigan studio potter, however, has forsaken the wheel because she finds slab and coil building more suitable for realizing her ceramic forms.

The McVey pottery shown on these pages underscore her reason for hand building: "Hand methods allow a form to be pushed out from the inside—to better express the energies and vitalities of growing things."

She does not, in fact, care for wheel throwing, because "the mystery of an ever-changing silhouette is more engrossing than the predictable contour of a thrown piece."

It is notable that many of Mrs. McVey's pieces have a stopper arrangement. She feels ("this is undoubtedly a shortcoming on my part") that most bowls and pots are incomplete, design-wise, out of their setting—without some fruit or flower arrangement, or perhaps a lampshade. The ceramic piece in use is her ideal. She "enjoys seeing them used in contemporary interiors—a small unit, self contained within a larger unit." And she cannot resist adding, "I have no desire to further burden the

kitchen 'wot-not' shelf."

In making each piece it is the form that receives her most solicitous attention. A glaze—or any decoration for that matter—is important only in its usefulness in revealing the basic form, is Mrs. McVey's credo.

She raw glazes and fires only once, to stoneware and porcelain temperature, trying to do the whole operation as simply and directly as possible. Colors in her stoneware are frequently in a neutral range and are likely to integrate into an established home color scheme. It does not concern her that there is much criticism of pottery decorated in muted colors. She replies, "I have always felt that the demand for color was really a revolt against the dullness of repetitive forms in pottery exhibitions."

AS for general criticism of American pottery, Cleveland-born Mrs. McVey has deeply felt ideas (of a positive nature, of course) on that subject. In her own words: "The form expression of our time is strong, vital, telegraphic. For the artists of a period to be content to accept unassimilated the art forms of another is an indication of intellectual hibernation."

"To me it is more gratifying to fail miserably in trying to live today's world than to succeed knowingly imitating products of the culture of some distant, unfamiliar place or people."





**HAND-BUILDING** is preferred by Leza McVey (left) . . . "to better express the energies and vitalities of growing things." She enjoys seeing her pottery in contemporary interiors particularly in her own home. With her (below) is her husband William McVey, the noted sculptor.



Why does this ceramic artist make the pottery she does? Because, says she, they are in her mind and she has to build them. "I find it exciting and engrossing to try to develop a vague image into a concrete reality, exciting enough that I'm willing to give up other things to do it."

Surely she has recognition in plenty to compensate for the "other things" she's had to give up. She has received numerous awards in the Syracuse Ceramic National, and has been a prize winner in the Cleveland "May Show" and the Michigan Artists Show. In this season's invitational shows her works have appeared at the Smithsonian, in Washington, D. C.; "6000 Years of Art in Clay" at Pomona, Calif.; and selected contemporary exhibits at the Universities of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Nebraska.

A graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Art, Mrs. McVey now lives and works in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. Before going to Michigan, the McVeys (her husband, William M. McVey, noted sculptor, teaches at the Cranbrook Academy of Art) lived in Texas for 15 years.

Like most successful people, Mrs. McVey enjoys her work; she finds "working with ceramic forms a tremendously exciting project." To her the development of a contemporary shape that moves tensely in space is worthy of the best efforts of any artist. ●

**McVEY CERAMICS** are most often bottles of stoneware or porcelain decorated with colors in a neutral range having a stopper arranged in a neutral arrangement. The piece at lower left (opposite page) is a 31-inch stoneware with a cherry ash glaze; gray vertical ribs are mat sand textured. A prize winner in the 1951 Ceramic National, the small red-black gun-metal piece at top left, is a foot-high stone-

ware decorated with earth slips. Next is a 29-inch stoneware with bone ash glaze. Raised white dots on a background of brown sand specks and cool gray enhance the 30-inch stoneware in center; glaze is cherry ash. Different wood ash bands on the 27-inch porcelain bottle at right vary the color from bright white through yellow to brome to bluish gray.



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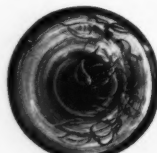
Swirl background. Free brush and line drawing with sgraffito. By Lucille Henderson.



Sponging and banding techniques. Line drawing decoration. By Lucille Henderson.



China Painting Technique. By Ida Stone.



Swirl background. Free brush and line drawing with sgraffito. By Lucille Henderson.

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Here's how you use TRANZ. First moisten your brush with water, wiping off all surplus on a sponge. Your brush should not be too wet. Select a TRANZ color and work it into the brush until filled to capacity. Shape the brush on a flat glazed tile. If it is a square edged brush make the edge come to a narrow point by touching the tip of the brush a few times. This also releases any empty space that might be in the body of the brush. If the brush is a long haired shader fill it to capacity and turn it as you shape it on the tile. This will give shape and a point to the brush at the same time ●

By thinning TRANZ with water the intensity of the color may be controlled. This can best be illustrated by making up a color tile. First use TRANZ as it comes from the bottle and draw a straight line, then thin the color with a little water and draw another line. You will find that you can keep thinning the color until there is just a trace of color showing. They will all be the same shade but with all of these color intensities ●

Now take another TRANZ color, turn your tile so that the lines run in the opposite direction, and use the same procedure, allowing the brush to cross the other lines. Now you will see why we call this versatile decorating medium TRANZ. With the different types of brushes now available it is possible to obtain many new hues and many interesting textures ●

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# ARE LEAD GLAZES DANGEROUS ?

by EDGAR LITTLEFIELD

THE NOVICE in ceramics does not work at the craft long before he hears something of the dangers of using lead in glazes. His reaction may be to assume that all lead glazes are unsafe. Some people develop an unreasonable phobia regarding their use while others go blythely along, apparently unaware or unconcerned with the possible toxicity of their glazes. Either course is foolish; the best thinking on the subject would recognize the dangers and then follow procedures designed to nullify them. While it is possible and practicable to make leadless glazes, few ceramists would wish to entirely exclude lead glazes from their recipe books, especially when working in the lower temperature ranges.

The matter of the toxicity of lead in glazes divides naturally into two phases: "A", danger connected with the compounding of the glaze; and "B", danger associated with the use of the lead-glazed ware.

A. Lead and its compounds are

Mr. Littlefield, who is Professor of Ceramic Art at Ohio State University, has a background in ceramic engineering and art.

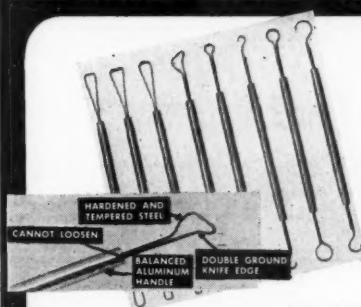
poisonous when they enter the digestive tract. Therefore, anyone using lead compounds should be extremely careful to avoid transferring lead from the hands to the mouth. This means that the hands should be well scrubbed after handling lead compounds, and it also means that to habitually smoke or munch food while preparing or applying lead glazes is to invite trouble. Lead dust can also enter the digestive system through the nostrils. A dusty workshop is likely to be a dangerous one if lead is used there. Efficient exhaust ventilation of spray-booths is an absolute necessity and the use of a dust-mask is a wise precaution.

The employment of a lead frit is often regarded as being a means of avoiding the danger, but this is not true unless the frit is so compounded that it has very low solubility in dilute hydrochloric acid, the chief component of the gastric juices. Frit manufacturers are aware of the problem and should supply solubility data on request.

B. Lead-glazed dinnerware or other food containers are not dangerous if the glaze has been properly compounded. The great majority of dinnerware are glazed with lead-bearing glazes, so

(Please turn to Page 29)

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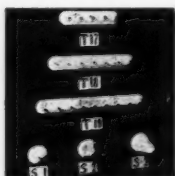
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(see page 31)



**RELIGIOUS MEDALLIONS** by Ada Korsakaite: "Angel Musicians" and "Madonna and Child." The procedure she uses is to press



soft clay—as at right—into the design which has been carved into a small block of plaster of Paris with a sharp, pointed tool.



**PRES**

**U**SING a variation of the press mold method of forming, a junior art major at Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, makes striking liturgical art pieces, from small medallions to wall panels.

Works created by Ada Korsakaite, 21, a displaced person from Lithuania, are so popular a Los Angeles art gallery and one in Beverly Hills have been selling her medallions as rapidly as she can complete them. Five of them have been accepted in this year's Eighth National Decorative Arts-Ceramic Exhibition, held in Wichita, Kan.

The procedure used is to carve a design into a small block of plaster. Any sharp, pointed instrument will usually prove satisfactory. The surface of the plaster might be painted with water color to make the carving easier to see.

The design can be "tested" from time to time by pressing soft clay into it.

When the design is finished a slab of clay is prepared in the usual manner by rolling it out with a rolling pin between two guide sticks. The slab is then placed over the mold, pressed down with the palm of the hand, and then peeled off. Slow drying will prevent warpage. The subsequent firing and coloring of the piece are up to the taste of the individual.

As a variation on a variation, a porcelain body can be used, firing to translucency. The method opens up a whole range of ideas for accessories; buttons, earrings, or scatter-pins, for example.

The idea has many possibilities, yet the procedure itself is so simple even elementary school children can master it. ●

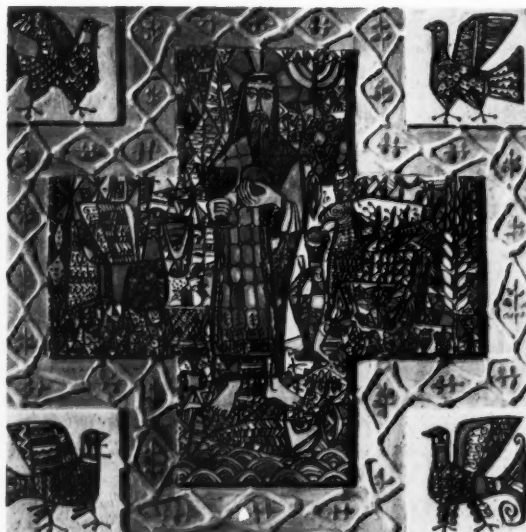


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**CERAMIC PLAQUE**, a 15 by 15-inch panel made by Ada Korsakaite in the same manner as she fashions her medallions, is installed in front of the main altar of St. Therese's Chapel in Palm Springs, Calif. She's currently working on the 14 stations for the chapel.



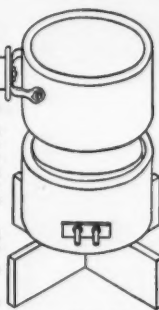
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(see page 31)



**TOOLS AND MATERIALS.** A pan of clean water, a set of measuring spoons, a wire whisk (it's used for whipping egg whites), and a fine mesh strainer are all the special equipment needed. For the slip itself, all you'll require is a small quantity of clay body and some underglaze color. A white, low temperature maturing clay body should be used, such as one containing a high percentage of talc.



**MEASURING THE MATERIAL.** In preparing colored clay slips you need not be meticulous in measuring out the ingredients. Take a slightly rounded tablespoon of underglaze color and put it in a small pan. Measure out four slightly rounded tablespoons of dry clay body. If you use a pan which has a rounded bottom instead of a flat bottom, a slip can be mixed more easily.



**MIXING.** Add just enough water to make the slip into the consistency of thin poster paint. Mix the colored slip with the water thoroughly but gently. Violent stirring will whip tiny air bubbles into the slip which may cause pin holes in the glaze firing. After it is well mixed it should be screened.

# a simple way to Prepare Clay Slip

by GLEN LUKENS

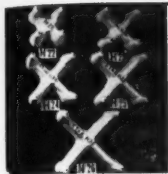
*Photos courtesy of Los Angeles city schools*



**SCREENING.** Use a small pan and coffee strainer. Pour the mixture of water, clay, and underglaze color into the strainer and rub it through with the fingers. After passing the mixture through the strainer three times, add water until the slip flows through the strainer without having to be rubbed through. If you store the finished slip in a closed jar it will keep indefinitely.



**APPLYING THE SLIP.** Colored clay slips are most successful when applied to leather hard clay. Apply it no thicker than poster paint with a moderately large brush. A misapplication of the slip can be scraped off with a paring knife. Finger marks can be removed in the same way.



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(see page 31)

## Lead Glazes

(Begins on Page 25)

made that they have no toxic effect on the user. A dangerous glaze would be one so soluble in weak food acids that lead would be released to contaminate foodstuffs. The food acids apparently most potent in their attack on glazes are acetic acid, a primary component of vinegar; and citric acid, which is present in all the citrus fruits. Oxalic acid, present in rhubarb, will also attack a poorly made glaze.

The solubility of lead in a glaze depends upon what other oxides are present. The inclusion of boric oxide in the composition greatly increases the solubility. The alkalis, potash and soda have a similar effect, though to a lesser degree. Alumina is powerful in decreasing the solubility and silica is only slightly less effective. Calcium oxide, zinc oxide, barium oxide, and zirconium oxide are all beneficial in thwarting solubility, with the oxide of calcium being of greatest value. Magnesia is of little value in this respect.

WITH the above in mind then, a low-solubility lead glaze would contain as little alkali and boric oxide, and as much alumina, silica, calcium oxide and/or zinc oxide as would be permitted by the particular conditions of firing temperature, glaze fit, etc., with such other materials as barium oxide and zirconium oxide being possible further additions.

It is the writer's opinion that a glaze which will stand immersions for 48 hours in vinegar, lemon juice, and rhubarb sauce without showing any change in texture or color is a safe glaze. In making such tests it would be well to immerse only a part of the test sample so that easy comparison can be made between treated and untreated areas. Vigorous rubbing of the treated area with the thumb may serve to make evident changes in texture not otherwise visible. Drawing a lead pencil across the area also may reveal textural changes.

There is no need to give up lead glazes. The ceramist, whether a hobbyist or a professional potter, should realize there are dangers and cope with them. If he exercises reasonable caution he need have no fear of lead. ●

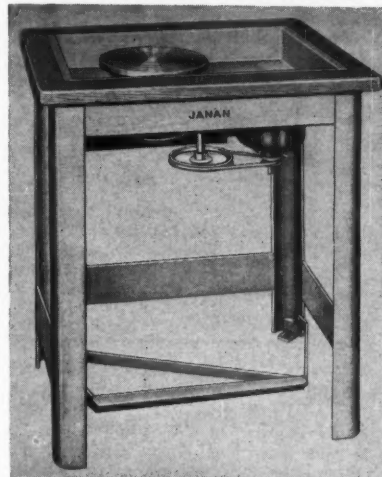
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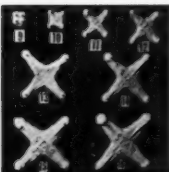
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## suggestions *from our readers*

### Tape Stand-in

Wax resist and rubber resist decorations can be simulated by substituting Scotch tape or any plastic tape for the wax or rubber as the resist material.

The tape is stuck on the bisque or the dry ware in the desired pattern, after which the glaze is sprayed over all. Before firing, the tape is of course peeled off the ware, leaving unglazed pottery underneath. Naturally, the decoration is limited to shapes which can be accomplished with strips of tape.

—C. H. Bixby

Los Angeles, Calif.

### Try Beeswax for Waterproofing

There seem to be so many inquiries for information on waterproofing a crazed vase or other type of container I would like to offer my remedy: beeswax is a much more satisfactory waterproofing agent than is paraffin.

Put some beeswax in the crazed piece and then place the piece in a cold oven. Heat the oven to approximately 250 degrees and hold it there for about one-half hour. The beeswax will penetrate the craze lines and stop the leaking. Also, it will not give a milky color to the water in the container when in use.

—Becky Brown

Nashville, Ind.

### Watch That Plaster-Water Ratio

Many people do not realize that the proportion of plaster to water that is used determines the properties of a plaster piece after it has dried. Also, the method by which the water and plaster is mixed will determine the setting time and other properties. Instructions should be followed carefully.

If too much plaster is added to the water, the result will be a dense piece (which will make a poor mold if that happened to be the end product). Adding too little plaster to the water will produce a weak, crumbly piece.

A good rule to follow is to add about two and three-quarter pounds of plaster to one quart of water.

—Martha Windron

Detroit, Mich.

### Mother Nature Models

I make press molds directly from fresh leaves and find that I am the source of undeserved flattery, since I

feel the compliments should be paid to Mother Nature. Each year I collect various leaves and petals and very often I plant special shrubs and flowers for their foliage.

The press molds are made by first rubbing each leaf lightly with a thin oil, placing them face down on a porcelain top or oil cloth-covered table and covering them with thin plaster. When the plaster has hardened, the leaves and petals are removed, and the result is a perfect press mold which will give natural looking leaves and petals to everyone—even those who have no artistic ability.

For best results—be sure you make your impressions shortly after picking the foliage.

—(Mrs.) Beverly Sumner

The Beverly Studio  
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### Chamois 'Sponge'

You can improvise a good "sponge" for cleaning greenware out of a damp chamois cloth.

—John Ghant

Chicago, Ill.

### Foam Rubber, Too

I very successfully use foam rubber in different size pieces instead of sponge to "clean up" my ware.

—(Mrs.) Joseph Schwarz

Dayton, Ohio

### Old Washer for Clay-mixing

An old washing machine can prove very useful to the ceramic hobbyist or studio craftsman. I bought mine for \$5 (it looked terrible, but was in good working condition.)

It makes an excellent slip blunger.

If the rollers work, they can be converted easily into a jar [ball] mill. This can be accomplished by rearranging the position of the rollers, placing them side by side. The jar [ball] mill rides on top of the rollers in the conventional manner.

—Hilliard M. Stone

Texarkana, Tex.

**Share your information.** Suggestions, facts, and other items of interest to ceramists are welcome. Sender will be paid for each item used.



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# What Is Clay?

(Begins on Page 9)

have so sleepily perused, while throwing  
crumbs to the library rodents.

While clay is moist it will respond  
to every unpredictable whim of the  
wackiest potter, but once it has been  
dried and subjected to intense heat, the  
molecular formation is changed, and  
the plastic quality is gone forever.

How do we know it is gone forever?

Grind the fired piece as long as you  
will . . . reduce it once more to a pow-  
der as fine as in the beginning . . . add  
water to it, and try to restore the  
original plasticity. It cannot be done.  
That mysterious quality has gone to  
join the secrets of the universe, and has  
left no forwarding address.

And here's another thing, along the  
same puzzling lines. You can take a  
mass of clay, analyze it, and learn its  
exact chemical composition. Then go  
out and collect the same chemicals  
from other sources and mix them in  
correct proportions. Add water and  
mix it well, but it will remain so many  
lifeless particles. In a word, you cannot  
produce synthetic clay which has  
plasticity.

The upshot of these and other experi-  
ments seems to leave unanswered that  
most important single characteristic of  
clay, plasticity. So there you see why  
"we scientists" gotta say we "dunno"  
exactly what it is.

On the other hand, if you should  
chance to romp through the 1,157  
books on ceramics in the Boston Public  
Library on a rainy Sunday afternoon,  
in a gay spirit of intellectual adventure,  
you would realize that scientists have  
not been idle during the last 2,000  
years of clay research. There are quite  
a few things they know about it. They  
know all about where it came from and  
exactly how it was formed. They can  
tell you about its atomic structure.  
They've even photographed (through  
an electron microscope) a single crystal  
of clay, around one ten thousandth of  
an inch in diameter. But about plas-  
ticity? . . . nothing, except that it is  
there.

**B**UT clay and its plasticity are for  
me an open sesame to that wonder  
world of creation. The mystery of plas-  
ticity is the keynote of my interpreta-  
tion of clay . . . and which gives it a  
kind of psychic meaning, and power.  
Since plasticity seems to be beyond  
normal explanation, it is *supernormal*,  
and can be understood best through  
extra-sensory perception.

What is clay? Again I say, despite  
the raised eyebrows, and lorgnettes,  
"I dunno"; but I love it; and maybe  
this love will lead me to the answer  
some day. I'll let you know if I  
find it. ●

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## Index of Advertisers

June 1953

|                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| American Beauty Ceramic Studio | 27, 31     |
| Anderson's Ceramic Supplies    | 29         |
| Angelo Brothers                | 26         |
| Ankraft Ceramic Studio         | 31         |
| Bell Ceramics                  | 2          |
| Buffalo Ceramic Center         | 29         |
| Cole, S., Co.                  | 29         |
| College Offset Press           | 31         |
| Craftools, Inc.                | 25         |
| Drawing, Charles H.            | 26, 29, 30 |
| Dutchess Junction Claybank     | 29         |
| Fairchild Ceramic Studio       | 4          |
| Gay-Way Pottery                | 30         |
| Harrison, The Kay, Studios     | 3          |
| Harrop Ceramic Service Co.     | C-2        |
| Holland Mold Shop              | 1          |
| House of Ceramics (Mass.)      | 7          |
| House of Ceramics (Tenn.)      | 3          |
| Houston, Charles, Molds        | 31         |
| Huff's Hobby Center            | 20         |
| Janan Instrument Co.           | 29         |
| J & M Ceramics                 | 31         |
| Kernian Krafts                 | 24         |
| L & L Mfg. Co.                 | C-4        |
| Lix-Crax                       | 25         |
| McDaniel Mold Co.              | 29         |
| Martin, Hazel B.               | 3          |
| Mason Color & Chemical Works   | 6          |
| Master Ceramic Mold Co.        | 31         |
| Master Mechanic Mfg. Co.       | 8          |
| Mayen, E. P., Co.              | 7          |
| Mercedes Ceramic Studios       | 30         |
| Model Ceramics                 | 30         |
| Paragon Industries             | 21         |
| Pillet, Nettie E.              | 27         |
| Pollock Studio                 | 29         |
| Re-Ward                        | 1          |
| Roder Ceramic Studio           | 8          |
| Sahvaro                        | 30         |
| Schmid, Ludwig                 | 8          |
| Snead, Jane, Ceramic Studio    | 26         |
| Specialized Ceramics Corp.     | 1          |
| Swobodas'                      | 29         |
| Thompson, Thomas C., Co.       | 27         |
| Tummins, Madge, Ceramic Studio | 26         |
| Vollmers Ceramic Studio        | 29         |
| Ward, S. Paul                  | 8          |
| Wolfe, Jack D., Co.            | 31         |

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# Show Time

## Cash Targets, Florida Exhibition

The Publicity Chairman of the First Annual Ceramic Exhibition, John J. Haskins, promised to supply us with information on the cash prizes the show will offer, and he's as good as his word. The Exhibition, incidentally, takes place at Lowe Gallery, the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Fla., June 15 to July 15.

Here's the award list to date: All Show Award, Ceramic League of Miami (the sponsor), \$50; purchase award in ceramic sculpture, Frank May, \$75; purchase prize in jewelry, Hedy B. Kuckku, \$25; purchase prize in enamels, Thomas C. Thompson, \$25; usable containers, A. T. Blumhord, \$15; and All-Craftsman Classification, \$15.

Those attending will see pottery, porcelain, ceramic sculpture, and enamels exhibited in eight divisions. The show is not limited to ceramists in the state; anyone may enter. June 9 and 10 are the dates for receiving entries, cards, and fees. Write Mrs. Juanita May, at her picturesque address, 1953 Tiger Tail Ave., Miami, for further details.

## 23rd Springfield Exhibit

David Durst's task in the 23rd Annual Exhibition of the Springfield (Mo.) Art Museum this year must have made him feel like a very lonely

man indeed. He alone made up the Jury of Selection for the exhibition showing, which was April 1-25.

Of the 350 pieces of ceramics, paintings, sculpture, and prints from artists and craftsmen from Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Iowa, and Arkansas, he chose 57 to be representative of the best.

The Purchase Awards Committee—Museum staffers Kenneth M. Shuck, Frederick Kieferndorf, and Beverly Hopkins—then set about and bought two stoneware bottles by Cecil Strawn of Lincoln, Neb., in the ceramics division. They're shown on this page.

Mr. Durst, by the way, is Chairman of the Fine Arts Department, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Ark.

## Martz, Duncan Win Awards

Frederick A. Sweet, Associate Curator of Paintings and Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago, may also have felt a bit "in the middle" as the sole juror of the 26th Annual Kentucky and Southern Indiana Exhibition of Art. He had some 14 prizes to award a field of 156.

The Exhibition was presented by the Art Center Association of Louisville at the J. B. Speed Museum there, April 1-29; and at the Fine Arts Gallery of the University of Kentucky at Lexington, May 4-22.

In the Crafts Division (others: painting, sculpture), Mr. Sweet honored



**PURCHASE AWARD** in ceramics went to Cecil Strawn of Lincoln, Neb., for his two stoneware bottles. The 13-inch tall one (at left) is reduction fired, blue and gray striped. Spots are iron oxide, (which was rust out of a car radiator). The other, 9 inches tall, is glazed with waxy white, also reduction fired.



"THE LITTLE ONE," a bowl by Karl Martz showing a small bird, was awarded the \$100 Maud Ainslie Craft Award in the 26th Kentucky and Southern Indiana Exhibition. The yellow ceramic plate entitled "Dancer" won for Julia Hamlin Duncan a \$15 Hadley Pottery Co. craft prize.

Karl Martz, instructor in ceramics in the Fine Arts Department of Indiana University, Bloomington, with the \$100 Maud Ainslie Craft Award for a ceramic bowl entitled "The Little One." Julia Hamlin Duncan won a \$15 craft prize given by the Hadley Pottery Co. with a yellow plate decorated with the figure of a dancer.

Mr. Sweet called the Martz bowl a "superb piece of potting expertly shaped and beautifully controlled." And "Dancer," said he, "has beautiful flow and rhythm."

### Kenmore's 500 & a Maypole

The Kenmore (N.Y.) Ceramic Guild not only prepared more than 500 pieces this year for their annual exhibit May 3 but completed a cooperative display entitled "Maypole Dance." The public, we're told, responded enthusiastically.

First prize ribbons went to the following winners: China Painting: a plate, Mrs. Fenwick Faulkner; Textures: a set of nut bowls textured and stained in maple, Mrs. R. C. Swartout Jr.; Sgraffito: plate, decorated then dried slab fashion in a swing mold, Mrs. Swartout; Mold Adaptation: lamp, Miss Florence Proctor.

### Come to the Fair!

Hi! Ho! Come to the Fair! reads the literature we've received from the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. It refers to their Sixth Annual Craftsman's Fair. The Fair scene will be City Auditorium, Asheville, N. C., July 20-24.

Of course, all types of craftsmen from the Southern Highlands will be

represented; and potters and enamelists will be there in force.

Last year some 7,000 visitors viewed the works of the Southern craftsmen from the Guild's area—from Maryland and the Virginias through Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, to the northernmost sections of South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama.

For information write the Guild at 8½ Wall St., Asheville, N. C.

### Good Design Examples

What is good design? is a question a lot of ceramists would like to have answered in concrete terms. Perhaps a good way to answer it is to point to the "Good Design" showing of contemporary merchandise now at the Chicago Merchandise Mart.

An example of what you'll see there is the flower pot and saucer designed by Harold Riegger, ceramist-designer of San Francisco, shown on this page. The combination is from the Miltonvale (Kansas) Potteries, and is said to be an example of admirable function combined with good designing and simplicity of production.

Made from Kansas clays, the flower pots are slip cast in the usual manner. The saucers are completely glazed, since they must be waterproof. The pots, however, are glazed only partially by dipping the unfired pot into



FLOWER POT AND SAUCER made by Harold Riegger for the Miltonvale (Kan.) Potteries, is one of the pieces currently being shown at the "Good Design" show at the Chicago Merchandise Mart. Six inches high, it holds a volume of 55 cubic centimeters.

glaze to a specified depth. Partial glazing is done for the sake of appearance and for retaining porosity. Both flower pot and saucer are made in three glaze colors.

The major economy production factor results from the pots being nested in the single firing they receive.

The "Good Design" show will receive at least four additional showings across the country. Closing date of the Chicago exhibit is indefinite.

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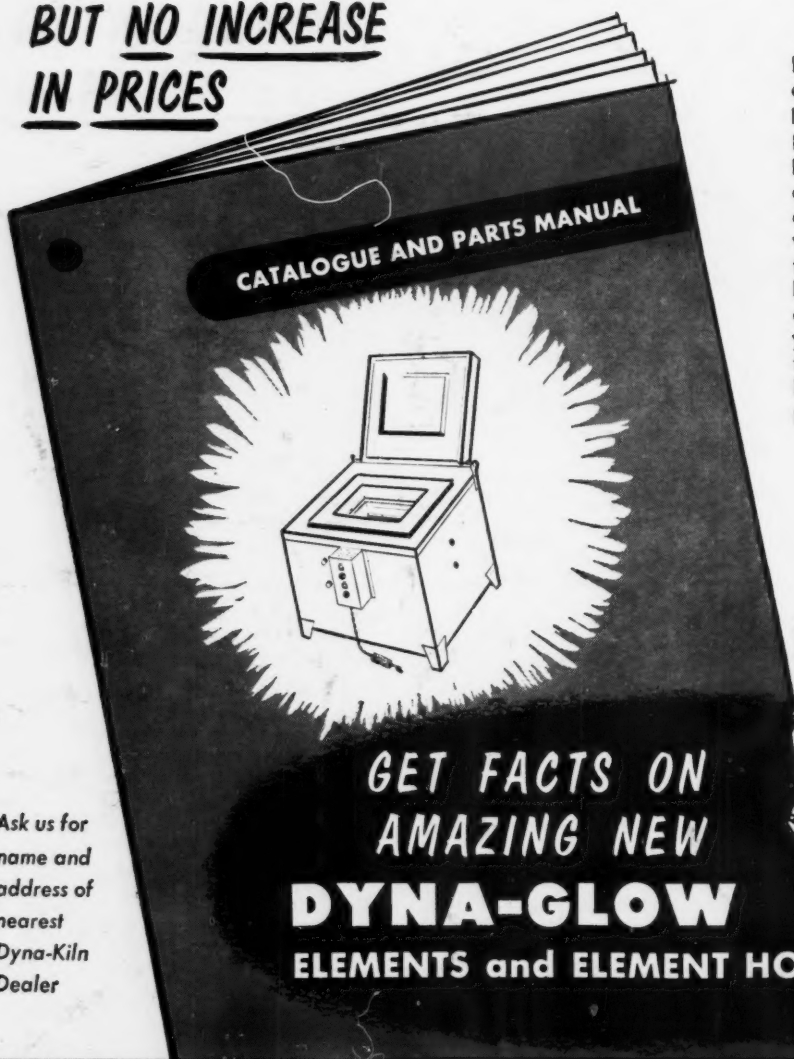
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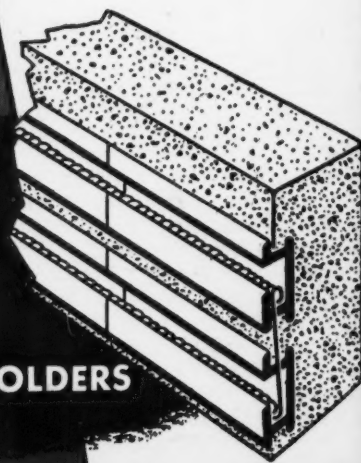
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